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ABSTRACT

At a March 2000 meeting, Australia's state, territory, and commonwealth ministers of education committed to a set of principles and standards for more culturally inclusive schooling in the 21st century. Building on a range of policy statements developed over the last decade, these principles and standards are described in terms of social justice and the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to quality schooling, services, and equitable and appropriate educational outcomes, and the rights and responsibilities of parents as the first educators of their children. The principles address a variety of mechanisms, including providing a supportive educational climate; establishing effective teacher-student relationships; enrolling all compulsory-aged Indigenous children in school; expecting all Indigenous children to be fluent in English while being inclusive of their home language; increasing Indigenous staff members and community involvement; providing curricula that are free from bias, affirm cultural identity, and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures; supporting parents; and improving access to government services. The standards aim to provide facilities and services that are accessible; are of equal quality to those provided to non-Indigenous children; enable completion of secondary education; provide services to Indigenous students with disabilities, especially hearing impairments; provide teachers that are qualified and trained in cross-cultural pedagogy; include Indigenous representation in decision making; provide culturally inclusive education in juvenile justice programs; enable Indigenous children to achieve literacy and numeracy; and ensure attendance by Indigenous students. (TD)

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ED 449930

National statement of principles and standards for more culturally inclusive schooling in the 21st Century

The State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education met as the 11th Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in Sydney, 30-31 March 2000, chaired by the Commonwealth Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, the Hon Dr David Kemp MP.

Conscious that the achievement of educational equality for Australia's Indigenous peoples is an urgent national priority, Council agreed to act jointly to assist schools in meeting this challenge.

In reaching agreement to address areas of common concern, the State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education committed to the following principles and standards for more culturally inclusive schooling in the 21st Century, for use as a framework for action.

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All Australians have the democratic right to an education that allows them a fair share of the social goods of education, ie. the right to participate fully in society as respected equals and to be able to choose from the same range of opportunities and futures as other Australians.

This democratic right to an education that prepares Indigenous Australians for a future in the 21st century has been supported by a range of national policy statements over the last decade: the Hobart Declaration on Schooling (1989), the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP, 1989), the National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (1996-2002) and the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century (1999).

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century (1999) states that 'Australia's future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision...Governments set the public policies that...safeguard the entitlement of all young people to high quality schooling'.

In particular, the Adelaide Declaration underlines the capacity of all young people to learn and the role of parents as the first educators of their children.

The Declaration also underlines the need to increase public confidence in school education 'through the establishment of explicit and defensible standards that guide improvement in students' levels of achievement and through which the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling can be measured and evaluated'.

In addition, the Adelaide Declaration states that schooling should be socially just, so that:

> 'students outcomes from schooling are free from the negative forms of discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability; and of differences arising from students' socio-economic background or geographic isolation' (3.1);
>
> 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access to, and opportunities in, schooling so that their learning outcomes improve, and over time, match those of other students' (3.3);
>
> 'all students have access to the high quality education necessary to enable completion of school education to year 12 or its vocational equivalent and that provides clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education and training' (3.6);

and in terms of curriculum, 'students should be numerate and able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level'.

The Adelaide Declaration, the AEP and the work over the last decade provides a framework for accelerating the achievement of equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians, in which the principles underpinning the education of Indigenous Australians are affirmed and more importantly a number of key standards are established.

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Principles

Principles are described in terms of the right of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to high-quality schooling and the rights and responsibilities of parents as the first educators of their children.

1. **Schooling acknowledges the capacity of all young Indigenous people to learn by:**

1.1 providing a climate that welcomes and values all Indigenous students and that expects and supports them to achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes;

1.2 establishing effective teaching/learning relationships between the educator and the Indigenous learner;

1.3 enrolling all compulsory-aged Indigenous children and expecting all Indigenous children to attend school regularly, be actively engaged and participate in a meaningful and confident manner;

1.4 expecting all Indigenous children to be fluent in Standard Australian English and at the same time being inclusive of the student's home language;

1.5 increasing the numbers of Indigenous people across all staffing levels and increasing the involvement of community members in the school;

1.6 providing a curriculum which:

(i) is free from the negative forms of discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability; and of differences arising from Indigenous students' socio-economic background or geographic isolation,

(ii) allows Indigenous students to share in the same educational opportunities experienced by other Australian students and at the same time allows them to be strong in their own culture and language and reposition their cultures, languages, histories, beliefs and lifestyles in a way which affirms identity and the ability to operate in cross-cultural situations,

(iii) supports all students to understand and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australian society and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians;

2. **Schooling acknowledges the role of Indigenous parents as the first educators of their children by:**

2.1 providing a climate that welcomes Indigenous parents and caregivers as valuable members of the school community;

2.2 actively increasing public confidence in education and training through a process of explicit involvement of Indigenous parents/caregivers and community in the achievement of equitable and appropriate educational outcomes;

2.3 supporting parents and caregivers of Indigenous students in their responsibilities to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

3. **Schooling acknowledges the close relationship between low levels of Indigenous educational outcomes and poverty, health, housing and access to government services and infrastructure by developing cross-portfolio mechanisms to address these issues.**

Standards

Standards are described in terms of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their teachers and education workers to access the same level of government services as other Australians and to achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes.

1. **Schooling is socially just when education facilities and services are provided by governments which:**

1.1 are locally accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children;

1.2 are built and maintained to the same standard for Indigenous students as for other Australian children in the State/Territory;

1.3 address the teaching practice and classroom acoustic requirements of hearing impaired Indigenous students;

1.4 provide all Indigenous students with access to the high quality education necessary to enable completion of school education to year 12 or its vocational equivalent and that provides clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education and training;

1.5 allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with disabilities, especially hearing impairments, to access specialist services and support at a level and quality considered appropriate for non-Indigenous students with similar disabilities;

1.6 ensure that teachers and other education workers involved in providing services to Indigenous students have the same level of qualifications as is required for teaching other Australian students in that State/ Territory;

1.7 ensure that the same level of educational infrastructure, facilities, services and professional development is available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and education workers as is available to other teachers and education workers in that State/ Territory;

1.8 ensure that all teachers and education workers involved in teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students participate in effective training in cross-cultural pedagogy and ESL;

1.9 ensure that all education and training advisory, management and review committees at a system level or in schools with Indigenous students have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander membership.

2. **Governments ensure that high-quality, accredited and culturally inclusive education and training opportunities are provided in prisons, youth detention centres and other juvenile justice programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.**

3. **Schooling will accelerate the achievement of equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students when:**

3.1 all Indigenous children achieve National Goals in Literacy and Numeracy by:

(i) leaving primary school numerate, and able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level,

(ii) meeting the national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy;

3.2 attendance rates for Indigenous students across all levels of schooling are comparable to the rates of their non-Indigenous peers;

3.3 participation rates to year 12 or its equivalent for Indigenous students are comparable to the rates of their non-Indigenous peers.